

Central Intelligence Agency

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Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

15 July 1983

Update on Cross-Recognition [redacted]

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Summary

Cross-recognition involving Chinese and Soviet recognition of South Korea in exchange for US and Japanese recognition of North Korea has made little progress as a formal process, despite a recent willingness in Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington to explore its merits in reducing tension on the Korean Peninsula. Although Moscow and Beijing have shown a willingness to deal with Seoul on a limited and unofficial basis, both have restated separately over the past several months their longstanding opposition to recognizing Seoul. P'yongyang steadfastly opposes the concept of formal cross-recognition as a scheme to perpetuate two Koreas and it clearly rejects unofficial moves by Moscow and Beijing toward Seoul as well. [redacted]

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Soviet and Chinese interest in South Korea appears to reflect in part their assessment of Seoul's rapid economic growth and growing importance in the region. Visits last fall by Soviet officials, as well as Soviet interest in a limited trade relationship with South Korea, awakened Seoul to the possibilities of greater contact with Moscow. Indirect Chinese trade with South Korea grew steadily between the late 1970s and 1982, when North Korean protests curtailed much of its volume, although it still continues. The hijacking of a Chinese aircraft to Seoul last May brought the first contact between South Korean and Chinese officials and greatly aroused hopes in Seoul for broader contacts with Beijing. [redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Korea Branch, Northeast Asia Division, Office of East Asian Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Korea Branch, [redacted]

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China's recent contacts with South Korea, however, have been prompted largely by other interests, such as discouraging, hijackings and defections, rather than a desire to upgrade relations. Seoul's initial enthusiasm following the hijacking has been dampened by recent Chinese behavior, including:

- Public Chinese statements that their Korea policy remains unchanged.
- Foreign Minister Wu Xuequian's visit to P'yongyang in mid-May and North Korean heir-apparent Kim Chong-il's visit to China in June.
- Beijing's refusal this spring to allow South Korean delegates to attend UN-sponsored conferences in China, although there are signs that Beijing--concerned over its interests in the UN--may allow similar visits in the future.

We believe Seoul has also scaled down its earlier expectations for contacts with the Soviets. In deference to North Korean sensitivities, Moscow has shown that it will proceed cautiously in its dealings with the South. [redacted]

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Still, the South Koreans are pressing ahead with their decade-old policy of encouraging contacts with P'yongyang's allies, which Seoul prefers to describe as "cross-rapprochement." In a speech on 29 June, Foreign Minister Lee reaffirmed this policy as one of Seoul's primary diplomatic goals for the 1980s. The South Koreans are setting modest sights, hoping for progress on such humanitarian issues as the Koreans displaced in the Soviet Union and China during World War II. Seoul also hopes to use the drawing card presented by international meetings--the Interparliamentary Union in October this year, as well as sports meetings including the Olympics in 1988--to broaden unofficial contacts. [redacted]

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At the same time, Seoul remains highly sensitive to the "other" side of cross-recognition--movement by Tokyo or Washington toward P'yongyang. This concern was recently underscored when South Korea protested Japan's unofficial probe of North Korea on the issue of formalizing longstanding commercial relations through reciprocal trade offices. Seoul also swallowed hard when earlier this year the US consulted with it on revised instructions to US diplomats on dealing with their North Korean counterparts. As the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles draw near, the South Koreans will be seeking assurances that the US will not permit the North to use "sports diplomacy" to broaden contacts with Washington. [redacted]

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